

To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it, is as if a man should put off eating and drinking from one day to another till he is starved and destroyed.

Free Christian Commonwealth

The Southern Presbyterian Review on the General Assembly and Louisville Presbytery.

Finally, as to their threat of withdrawing from the Church in case it could not be reformed, this is not a new threat. It has been made many times before. The Assembly might be deemed an act of defiance, and hence be censured as a contempt. The Declaration and Testimony, however, was not addressed to the Assembly, but to the Church at large, just as the Act and Testimony of 1834. But the Presbytery of Chillicothe not only threatened the Assembly with withdrawal, about twenty-five years ago, but actually abstained from sending commissioners to the Assembly for two or three years; and declared they could not do so, as long as slaveholders were allowed to sit in the Church. Of this conduct the Assembly took no notice. Moreover, what did Dr. Gurley do in this very Assembly at St. Louis, but to its face declare that if it did not exercise discipline on these recalcitrant brethren, he would withdraw his cover elsewhere? This was deemed no offense to this Assembly, because Dr. Gurley had become a leader, and was simply hectoring them a little. What did Mr. Galloway do, in this same Assembly, but declare that he would not sit in an Assembly with men who had cast him out? And so the threat of withdrawal, the Assembly had to redress their private grievances by expelling a member.

How would it have sounded, in 1837, had Dr. Baxter uttered such a threat in relation to this effect: "That whereas Dr. N. S. Beman, a commissioner from the Presbytery of Troy, is understood never to have adopted the Constitution of this Church, and whereas, it is probable that his Presbytery would have deposed him from the ministry, but they obeyed the injunction of the Assembly of 1835 on the subject of trying men for their doctrinal errors: Therefore, Resolved, That until the Assembly shall have examined and decided on the conduct of said Presbytery, the said commissioners shall not be entitled to his seat." Would it not have startled the Assembly, and shocked its moral sense, at that day, before the Church had run wild with political excitement? It would have been said that no charges had ever been tabled against Dr. Beman. Neither have charges ever been tabled against Dr. Stuart Robinson, notwithstanding all the hue and cry which have been raised against him. It would have been said that no one could be pronounced guilty by a legislative action, until proof had been informed into; that innocence must be proved, and guilt has been judicially established. This, again, is a principle recognized everywhere, except in the case of Dr. Stuart Robinson and the Declaration and Testimony men. It would have been said that the forcible action of the Assembly had destroyed its integrity, and rendered the whole of its proceedings null, since it could no longer claim to consist of an equal delegation of ministers and elders from every Presbytery, and hence that it did not represent the whole of the particular churches of the denomination. And had such an outrage been perpetrated, it would have weighed in the balances against the Old School before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in 1846.

This latter point was, indeed, raised and argued with great force against the action of the St. Louis Assembly under consideration, by Dr. Van Dyke, of Brooklyn, in his able protest. The answer to it, prepared by Dr. West, also of Brooklyn, and adopted by the Assembly, cannot be considered anything less than a complete acknowledgment of the validity of the objection. The reply is that Dr. Van Dyke's principle would vitiate every meeting of the Assembly, because some delegates fail to attend at every meeting. This may pass for a good reason, which weapons may answer to foil an adversary, but surely Dr. West and the Assembly must have known that this argument, if we may call it such, did not, in the slightest particular, touch the difficulty raised by Dr. Van Dyke. That silence gives consent, is a law of all fraternal associations, and voluntary absence is the most potent form of silent acquiescence. This is more especially the case when the law of organization, by which the members are bound, specifies the quorum to whose decisions they are to submit. But is there any analogy between the voluntary absence and silent acquiescence of Presbyteries or their commissioners, and the forcible ejection of lawfully delegated members? Is there ever a quorum present in any deliberative Assembly, when any man is forcibly excluded? Can he be called a General Assembly? Can he be called a General Assembly? Is this Dr. Van Dyke's point, which Dr. West does not touch, does not even approach, thereby confessing his inability to meet it.

Indeed, one member, Mr. Galloway, we believe, defended his action taken against the Louisville commissioners, by charging that the Assembly of 1837 had ejected the commissioners from the "four Synods" from the house without giving them a hearing. He said the Assemblies of 1837 and 1838 had out of Presbyteries and Synods in this manner. Mr. Galloway must get the history of his own church from the New School; for this is precisely what they have always charged on the Old School, but which the Old School have always denied. The New School have charged that those Presbyteries and Synods had never been lawfully constituted; but nobody has yet denied the legality of the organization of the Presbytery of Louisville. Hence, the case of the disowned Synods is not analogous to the case in hand, and forms no justification of the recent action of the Assembly.

Indeed, such a proceeding was never dreamed of in 1837. At that day it would have been denounced as an arbitrary assumption of tyrannical power by an irresponsible majority. And undoubtedly, all unprejudiced men outside of the Old School body must account their recent course toward the Louisville commission-

ers. Men must be tried and convicted before being condemned. And this was precisely the course Dr. R. J. Breckenridge aimed at. He does not often secure his objects by indirection; but comes up to the issue before him squarely, meeting them face to face. In this case, he endeavored to arraign the lower court on direct charges, condemn it on them, and execute sentence accordingly. This course would have challenged the respect of all men, whatever might have been the final result, for it would at least have shown a decent respect for the forms of justice.

But in an evil hour the Assembly fell under the lead of Dr. D. V. McLean, who understands nothing of the forms, and would seem to care but little for the ends of justice and consequently brought on itself the indelible discredit of its tyrannical course towards the Louisville Presbytery.

The resolution having been adopted to exclude the Presbytery of Louisville, on the motion of the same extraordinary leader, Dr. D. V. McLean, it was "resolved" that a committee of seven be appointed, composed of four ministers and three laymen, to examine the facts connected with the alleged acts and proceedings of the Louisville Presbytery, and whether it is entitled to representation in this General Assembly; and to recommend what action, if any, this General Assembly should take with regard to the same Presbytery.

The resolution thus appointed a Committee to inquire into its conduct, and report whether it ought to be excluded. First, they hang the men, and then enquire whether they ought to hang them. This would scarcely be recognized out West, or in the South, as "rough justice." Under the unwritten code of Judge Lynch, as always, under that code, a formal trial is had, and a formal sentence pronounced, antecedent to execution. This Assembly, however, was filled with admiration of the Congress of the United States, and tried to justify every arbitrary proceeding by a reference to the rights and corresponding action of its two Houses. But did anybody ever hear of such proceedings in either House of Congress? We admit that in its past history, and especially in more recent proceedings, processes of a most extraordinary nature may be found. But just here, the appeal to Congress fails. It sometimes has adopted very startling measures, and by most unaccountable votes has vacated seats filled by men whose views were antagonistic to its own policy. We believe, however, there is no instance on record where they have vacated the seat first, and then inquired into the grounds of their action afterwards.

The leaders of the Assembly, however, did not agree among themselves as to the manner in which the Presbytery was before the Assembly. While some contended, as we have seen, that it was under process, upon the appeal and complaint against the Synod of Kentucky, others contended that it was now under process because of these proceedings. But as neither of these views seemed satisfactory, Dr. Thomas made the rescue of his cause, and claimed that the Presbytery was before the Assembly under the power of review and control. We cannot take the time nor the room to examine all the points raised in this interminable discussion; but as to this claim of power, we would refer to the Chapter on Review and Control in the Book of Discipline, where they will see how widely the course of the Assembly differed from the course prescribed, if this was the kind of power which was aimed at. Dr. Hodge comes to the aid of the Assembly in his article on its proceedings in the July number of the *Princeton Review*, and, in the one important aspect of constitutional right, justifies all that was done. True, he thinks the punishment of the Declaration and Testimony men was excessive; but he says, "It is comparatively a small matter that a court should inflict an unduly severe penalty; or that the judges should be harsh and overbearing in his spirit and manner, provided he has the law on his side." This is new doctrine. We always supposed that the end of discipline was the maintenance of justice, not the assertion of power; and in our simplicity, we supposed that it was a matter of great importance for a Christian man to get his rights; far more so than for a church court to exert its power, even though it may have been on its side. We suppose, therefore, that the late Assembly either to remove Dr. Hodge from his chair, or make him keep quiet concerning the unwelcome proceedings of the Assembly. Undoubtedly the Assembly had the power to remove him; the law would have been on its side. But we scarcely think Dr. Hodge or his friends would have thought it a small matter had the Assembly put forth such an exercise of its power. It would have been an act of unquestionable tyranny. And when Dr. Hodge teaches the Church that it is of its duty to defend the law, and that, provided it has the law on its side, he is whetting a sword for his own neck. Nor is this the first time that just such a thing has happened in history.

A Parable.

A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects and said to him: "What is your employment?" He said: "I am a blacksmith." "Go home," said he, "and make me a chain of such a length." He went home, and he had no wages all the time he was making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, and he said: "Go and make it twice as long." He gave him nothing to do it with, but sent him away. Again he worked on, and made it twice as long. He brought it again, and the monarch said: "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still. And when he brought it up at last the monarch said: "Take it, and bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into a furnace of fire." These were the wages of making the chain. Here is a meditation for you to-night, ye servants of the devil? Your master, the devil, is telling you to make a chain. Some have been fifty years welding the links of the chain; and he says: "Go and make it longer still." Next Sabbath morning you will open that shop of yours, and put another link on; next Sabbath you will be drunk, and put another link on, next Monday you will do a dishonest action; and so you will keep on making fresh links to this chain; and when you have lived twenty more years, the devil will say: "More links on still!" And then at last, it will be: "Take him and bind him hand and foot, and cast him into a furnace of fire." For the wages of sin is death. There is a subject for your meditation. I do not think it will be sweet; but if God makes it profitable, it will do you good. You must have strong medicine sometimes, when the disease is bad. God apply it to your hearts. *Spurgeon.*

For the Free Christian Commonwealth.

Another effect of the Bible is to compel men to stand where their characters put them.

Let no young man be gulled by the shallow for the deep, nor by the false for the true. The thing, which invests human nature with its noblest characteristics, is its capacity for religious knowledge, duties, and enjoyments. And without these, life at best is but a brilliant flash or a flying vapor.

The Bible is the infallible standard of right and wrong, of truth and error. It gives us the true testimony of man's fall and recovery. But young people do not possess the knowledge to detect, nor the power to sift the sophistries and deceptions of those who seek to draw away disciples after them. The Bible has its enemies and perverters. But men are against it because it is against them. But there is nothing new in the argument and nothing uncommon in the attempt. That the Bible must soon vanish before learning and knowledge is nothing more than the old tune played by new hands. It is the hackneyed notes of many centuries and seems to live merely to tantalize its votaries. If constant and never failing falsification could destroy its vitality, it would have gone down unheeded and unsung long since. But after all this prattle and twaddle about science, literature, and knowledge; about light, progress, and the fool's paradise, the Bible lives more and more prominent in every age of the world.

But who are the great promoters and defenders of this science and knowledge which are to chase the Bible from the face of the globe? Who rear the educational banners that float over Christendom? Who carry the light and plant the institutions of learning in every land? Who make it the business of their lives to see that the world is supplied with the instrumentalities of knowledge? Are they the friends or the enemies of the Bible? No one dreams for a moment that its enemies are likely to put themselves to any cost or trouble, and much less to a life-long effort for any such purpose. There is no dread of light by the friends of the Bible. They are the men who are scattering it everywhere abroad and it is upon them that its success depends. Who are the great philosophic and scientific lights in the world? They are, just as they have always been, taken in the mass, the receivers and defenders of the Bible; and no men, more than these, look with keenness or more consuming contempt upon the baldness of driving the Bible out of the world by the light of knowledge. But time, with rude and cruel derision, tears away all the shallow pretensions of infidelity, and does with especial scorn lay bare its most preposterous pretense of being the light of the world. The Bible is, in its very nature, the great promoter of all knowledge, so much so, and so indubitably so, that its missionaries generally also become the missionaries of general knowledge and learning. It is therefore, not less absurd to talk of light vanishing before the sun, than to talk of the Bible vanishing before knowledge. The Bible itself is a boundless field of knowledge, and the learning employed upon it has been of the very greatest and profoundest nature. And if the Bible be a bad book and false, why do the wisest, the best, and the most learned of men love to walk in its light, and to draw from it the strength of their moral life?

But is it in the nature of things, that a false book, a book full of imposture and venal and vicious deceit, can inculcate the greatest, loftiest, and purest of truths and noblest of conduct? With falsehood as its basis, and imposture as its design, how can it be the great treasury of divine knowledge and the teacher of the purest and loftiest of morals? How should it contain the sublimest views of the divine character and the most exalted principles of human conduct? Why produce purity and cast out vice? Why denounce falsehood and imposture, if the whole object is to promote both? These, with a thousand more absurdities, still greater if possible, all go to show the utter confusion and contradiction of all moral and logical ideas in the mind of infidelity.

It is therefore, not strange that vice, ignorance, and self conceit, that half learning and no learning, that twopenny philosophy and transcendental fog-matics, that the gibberings of atheism and the babblings of self-inflation, that the peepings and mutterings of its house of gloom, and the flittings and menaces of ghosts, that never had a substance or a habitation, should make up the sum total of an unbeliever's creed and endurances.

But the tree is known by its fruit, and in spite of all his pretensions the unbeliever is known by his. The Bible compels each man to stand out in his true character. If infidelity has fruit, good and creditable to show, let us see what. What ignorance has it dispersed, what moral and intellectual blessings has it conveyed to any land or nation? What tears has it wiped from the widow's eyes and what orphans' tongues has it ever made sing for joy? Into what places has it entered with the gifts of peace and the offers of life? What hovels has it entered with the light of hope,

and to what children of sorrow has it spoken the words of consolation? What children has it gathered from dirt and squalor and educated for honor, purity, and respectability? Where are the monuments of its worth, and where are the nations prospering in the light of its faith? The only answer to this is, the French Revolution—the reign of terror, blood and carnage. But beside this outbreak of its fury and fanaticism, the multitudes that are ever flying from its gloomy regions of discomfort and horror, bear one uniform testimony against it. They find that to darken the mind and to silence all its great moral enquiries does not satisfy the soul. To sneer at death and eternity is the fool's defence. But the effect of the Bible is to show these men off in their true deformity.

We are sick of shams and humbugs and of idle pratings about science and knowledge where there is neither, and it is preposterous that such things should be treated with the deference due to truth. Nothing yet has been able to stand long as an antagonist of the Bible, nor can any of those things, vital to the great interests of nations stand without its support. Whether it be false and godless schemes of philanthropy, of education, or what not, all have at last to meet the fate of the enemies of the Bible.

Infidelity has tried its hand in two instances in our country and upon its own theory. We allude to its two great educational enterprises—the University of Virginia, and the Girard College, Philadelphia. These institutions give evidence of an inborn and essential worthlessness in all schemes of infidel philanthropy. They were devised upon infidel plans and looked forward to infidel ends. But neither the fame of Jefferson in the one, nor the wealth of Girard in the other, could vitalize the rotten principles upon which they were instituted. Neither of them was able to stand upon its legs until Christian men took hold of them and breathed life into their dry bones. Established as they were, in utter ignorance of the true nature of Christianity, we are glad and thank God that their failure is so clear and inevitable upon the principles of their founders. And it is a matter of solemn joy and triumph to see these institutions, great and powerful as they are, working out vast and beneficial results, under the very spirit they were designed to overthrow. We love to see the defeat and dishonor of infidelity, in a way so distinct and indisputable. The turning of the counsel of the wicked upside down is most manifest in these instances.

From the Southern Presbyterian Review.

Buckle's History of Civilization.

It has been the lot of Christianity to encounter constant attacks, so that from the summit to the base, no stone has escaped assault. No Sebastian ever stood such a siege. Not the least dangerous of these attacks is that of Mr. Buckle, who with all his genius seems little aware of the tendencies of the skepticism he so much loves, and that but become universal, and the restraints of faith all be relaxed. The being of God, the fact of revelation, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the truth of their records, have each in its turn been the subject of attack by the enemies of Christianity. Physics, metaphysics, statistics, geology, statistics, have been brought to bear against it. Buckle has marshalled all the forces of infidelity, reorganized them, reinforced them, skillfully disposed them for battle, surprising this point, taking that by storm; using all the arts of consummate generalship, with the most consummate skill. His attack is the culmination of the infidelity of the nineteenth century, its blossom and fruitage, its concentrated power, its aggressive and vigorous attack, proud, stately, confident of success, in which materialism, utilitarianism, worldly policy, statistics, and their kindred sciences, are all enlisted, and make war upon Christian truth; endeavoring to conciliate into neutrality all who occupy a doubtful position by artful concessions, and making overtures to its friends by propositions of compromise. 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